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Joe Hill: IWW Songwriter

by Dean Nolan & Fred Thompson

developed largely outside of Hill's union. Hill's persistence as an enduring symbol is thus not some artifice maintained by a handful, but part of the process, like his funeral procession, through which the working class shapes its hopes and values. Hill has become an industrial William Tell. William Tell was assumed to be a real person in history until it was found that his story, or one like it, is to be found wherever there is a class society and the oppression that accompanies it.

Joe Hill, however, was a real man as well as a legend. He did live. He did organize for the IWW. He plainly had it in mind in his final wire: "Don't mourn — organize". The IWW, a bit legendary too, is still here trying to achieve Hill's hopes for a world run by workers, able to run it for their own good when they reach an understanding not to scab on each other, or shoot each other, or let themselves be used against each other in any way. The world has changed since 1915. Then Hill's vision of world labor solidarity was a decorative sentiment in a world torn by a war fought with weapons now obsolete. Today that vision of world labor solidarity has become indispensable to human survival. Is it too optimistic to feel that the warmth shown Joe Hill in 1979 is a recognition of this fact?

On May 29, 1979, Harriet L. Marcus, Vice-Chairman of the Utah Board of Pardons replied to Folke G. Anderson, a Swedish-American musician who has sought exoneration for Hill. She wrote: "Dear Mr. Anderson: The Board feels that it would be inappropriate to grant a retroactive pardon in an ambiguous case."

If the case was ambiguous, why did they shoot Joe Hill?

DON'T MOURN — ORGANIZE

Shortly after Salt Lake City police arrested Joe Hill on January 13, 1914, they got in touch with the Chief of Police at San Pedro, California, where Hill had previously lived. The Chief of Police there had fought Hill's efforts to organize longshore workers and replied: "I see you have under arrest for murder one Joseph Hillstrom. You have the right man... He is certainly an undesirable citizen. He is somewhat of a musician and writer of songs for the IWW Songbook." (Salt Lake City, *Herald-Republican* Jan.23,1914)

His meaning was clear. Though he lacked details of the murder with which Hill was charged, he had no doubt that Hill was "the right man". For him, Hill symbolized working class threats to the established order. The men he admired did not want their workers to organize, or to sing songs such as Joe Hill had written, ridiculing them and the police, challenging their right to wealth they had not produced. From these biases it came about that Joe Hill was tried and executed for a murder he did not commit.

Joe Hill was born Joel Emmanuel Haggland on October 7, 1879 in Gavle, Sweden. One of 9 children, he was brought up in a conservative and highly religious family atmosphere. It was a closely knit family in which both parents encouraged music, and during his early years Joel learned to play the organ as well as the violin, accordion and guitar.

In 1887 Joel's father Olaf, a railway conductor was injured at work and died. All members of the hard hit family had to earn what they could, including 8-year old Joel who went to work in a rope factory. In his teens he contracted tuberculosis of the skin and joints and was treated in a Stockholm hospital, but the disease left his body scarred. In 1902 his mother died and the family fell apart. He and his brother Paul left for America and landed in New York. Like many immigrants of the time, Joel changed his name, first to Joseph Hillstrom and then to Joe Hill.

Few hard facts are known about Joe Hill's first 10 years in America. Although there are a number of stories about the places he had been and things he had done, one account putting him in Hawai'i, few can be substantiated. His brother Paul later told Ralph Chaplin that at first Joe worked as a porter in New York and played piano in saloons there. Joe did send a Christmas card to his sister from Cleveland in 1905. In April

1906 he was in San Francisco during the Earthquake and wrote an account of it for his hometown paper.

He became one of thousands of migrant workers who were building America or harvesting its wheat. Men who worked the harvests later spoke of knowing him there, and he was in a picket camp on the Canadian Northern Railway when the IWW struck it in 1912. Joe worked so much as a longshore worker that he referred to himself as a "wharf rat". Bill Chance shacked with him in San Pedro, where he worked longshore, but says Joe talked so little about himself that he could add no details. Neither could Alexander McKay, who also worked with Hill, and wrote recollections of the 1912 San Diego free speech fight in 1947.

During the first half of 1911, Hill with his friend Sam Murray and other IWW members and radicals who supported Madero and Magon in the Mexican revolution were in Lower California, trying to protect it from Diaz. Hill was there only off and on, but he could not have been there if he had not by that time dropped the conservative views which he brought with him to America. In 1913, Hill was secretary of the local IWW formed in San Pedro.

The earliest parody written by Hill that we know of, went to the hymn, "Sweet By and By", a Salvation Army favorite. It was already in circulation before it appeared in the 1911 edition of the IWW songbook. It went:

Long-haired preachers come out every night
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right
But when asked about something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet:
You will eat, by and by
In that glorious land above the sky
Work and pray, live on hay
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.
If you fight hard for children and wife
Try to get something good in this life
You're a sinner and a bad one they tell
When you die you will surely go to hell

Hill's song added a phrase "pie in the sky" to the American vocabulary,

Some admired his determined stand that a man need not prove himself innocent, for they knew how hard it often is for migratory workers to prove the most simple facts about their lives. Some admired the man who could write that final will. All who marched felt he was a man on their side, against those who were cheating them out of the life they wanted — a man worth imitating.

In 1925 Alfred Hayes wrote a poem, "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night", that became widely known through the labor movement after Earl Robinson set it to music in the 30's. A line in that ballad, "I never died, said he" suggested the title to Barrie Stavis's play, a play prefaced with one of the first serious attempts to assemble the facts of Hill's life. In Sweden in 1951, Ture Nerman published the information of Hill's boyhood as Joel Haggland — information quite new to Hill's friends.

In 1964, the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) brought out a documentary on Hill in their Other Voices series, in which Don Francks sang many of Hill's songs against a background depicting his life here. Two years later Phil Ochs wrote words and music for a lengthy ballad. In 1970 the University of Utah Press brought out Gibbs Smith's *Joe Hill*, the most complete study of the man yet written, and republished later as a Grosset & Dunlap paperback under the title *Labor's Martyr, Joe Hill*.

In Sweden and California, Bo Widerberg produced a rather imaginative film on Hill. The Swedish union SAC has honored Hill by making his birthplace into a labor museum. When King Gustav of Sweden visited America in 1976, he brought to the Walter Reuther Labor History Archives at Wayne State University, where old IWW records are preserved, copies of the extensive correspondence between the Swedish government and the American authorities on behalf of Hill. A visitor to Geneva, Switzerland, reports seeing Hill, bigger than life, decorating the walls of more than one office of the trade union internationals centered there.

There is that about Joe Hill that has endeared him to union people around the world, including many who know they might have quite an argument with Joe if they could meet. These many expressions of regard and plans to celebrate his 100th birthday October 7, 1979, have

Joe Hill has become known as "the man who never died", the title Barrie Stavis gave to his 1951 play about Hill. His songs are still sung, and he is not forgotten. The 100th anniversary of his birthday is being honored by labor movements in many places, taking as the theme his wire: "Don't mourn — organize." There is a demand for his exoneration as Sacco and Vanzetti have been exonerated because they and the injustice to them have not been forgotten either.

Hill's union has regularly memorialized his execution in November, along with others who gave up their lives in labor struggles in other Novembers: the 8-hour advocates who were hanged in Chicago November 11, 1887; the free speech fighters shot down on the *Verona* at Everett, Washington November 5, 1916; Wesley Everest lynched for defending the Lumber Workers hall in Centralia, Washington November 11, 1919; the miners shot down at the Columbine Mine in Colorado November 21, 1927; and others. Ralph Chaplin wrote a verse for all of these:

Red November, black November
Bleak November, black and red
Hallowed month of labor's martyrs
Labor's heroes, labor's dead.
Labor's wrath and hope and sorrow
Red the promise, black the threat
Who are we not to remember?
Who are we to dare forget?
Black and red the colors blended
Black and red the pledge we made
Red until the fight is ended
Black until the debt is paid.

Hill soon became a legendary figure. References to him came up in more publications than one would want to count. A man is most likely to turn into myth and legend when his life becomes a symbol of some widely felt wish. There was an inkling of this in the unexpected thousands who filled Chicago streets for his funeral, for most of them were outside the groups that had been demanding a new trial. Some were there because they loved his songs.

a phrase often used by people who would be surprised how it came about. In those days before movies, before radio, when phonograph was still an odd-sounding toy, the music most available to workers, especially migratory workers of the West, was that of the Salvation Army and other street evangelists. They usually performed along "skid road", the section of town where migratory workers could find the cheapest meals, the cheapest "flops" or lodging, and a series of signs chalked on blackboards offering them another job for a dollar — roughly a day's pay at the time. These skid roads became the battlefield for worker's minds, between those who wanted to keep things as they were, and those who wanted to change and improve things. Hill's parody had several verses, the final verse and chorus running:

Working folks of all countries unite
Side by side we for freedom will fight
When the world and its wealth we have gained
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:
You will eat, by and by
When you've learned how to cook and how to fry
Chop some wood, 'twill do you good
And you'll eat in the sweet by and by.

Hill's union, the Industrial Workers of the World, was launched in 1905 by the Western Federation of Miners, some smaller unions, and rebels in better established ones, in the hope of bringing the millions of unorganized workers and those in existing organizations into One Big Union of the Working Class, so that no group of workers could be used to break the strike of another group.

Asserting as its name implied, the widest jurisdiction a union could have, its concern was the welfare of the worldwide working class, and its ultimate aim the reorganization of industry, to be run by its workers for the general good.

Its practical activities were smaller scale, but notable. In the Pittsburgh industrial suburb of McKees Rocks in 1909, in response to a call for help from car builders already out on strike and excluded from the craft union a handful of skilled workers had there, the IWW went in and won. The strike drew wide attention, for it proved that unskilled immigrant

workers speaking with a confusion of tongues, could stick together and win even though the established unions refused to accept them. On western construction projects, in lumber camps and along the skid roads where these migratory workers got their jobs, the IWW was engaged in efforts to raise the pay, establish showers and laundry rooms on these out-of- town jobs, and make the company provide beds and bedding so that workers could discard the blanket rolls they had carried on their backs.

In Spokane Washington the IWW concluded that the practical way to organize the workers on these projects was to get them to make the companies set up a free hiring system , by concerted refusal to patronize the "job sharks" who sold them the right to hire out. This could be done without risking a strike. The IWW promoted the idea from skid road soap boxes. The soap box, an improvised stand for a street speaker, was an established institution of the times. It was used by evangelists, socialists, advocates of new diets and currency reform, by the IWW, and by women who had the novel idea that they too should be allowed to vote.

As the IWW campaign to bypass the job sharks became effective, these employment agents countered by getting the Salvation Army or other religious groups to drown out the IWW speakers with trumpet and drum. The IWW replied with song cards containing verses to be sung to these hymn tunes. Both used the song, "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" that closed a still current melodrama, but the IWW version depicted the wandering boy as being yanked by a cop from a freight train and sent to a chain gang. For another Army favorite, "Revive Us Again", the card carried:

O why don't you work like other folks do?
How in hell can I work when there's no work to do?
Hallelujah, on the bum! Hallelujah bum again
Hallelujah give us a handout to revive us again.

These song cards in 1909 grew into the first IWW songbook, in its early editions aimed mostly at the employment sharks. Hill's pie-in-the-sky song fit this skid road situation and so did another he wrote to the hymn, "There Is Power In The Blood":

examine its witnesses and lay a foundation for witnesses he might then call. On October 18, he was sentenced to be shot November 19.

The massive protest continued to grow, with a new issue in November. On October 30, Salt Lake City police officer Myton took exception to remarks made by R.J. Horton in a street talk on behalf of Hill, and shot and killed Horton. On November 16, the American Federation of Labor in convention assembled resolved that the Governor should grant Hill a new trial. Telegrams and letters of protest came to the governor by the hundred daily, and also threatening letters, some traced later to a detective agency. Preparations to protect the governor from some imagined attack were much publicized. Hill worked calmly on a new song dedicated to the dove of peace. He wired Bill Haywood, general secretary of the IWW: "Don't waste any time in mourning — organize." At 10 p.m., November 18, Hill handed a guard a slip of paper headed "My Last Will".

My will is easy to decide
For I have nothing to divide
My kith don't need to fuss and moan
Moss does not cling to a rolling stone
My body — Ah, if I could choose
I would to ashes it reduce
And let the merry breezes blow
My dust to where some flowers grow
Perhaps some fading flower then
Would come to life and bloom again
This is my last and final will
Good luck to all of you
Joe Hill.

After a funeral service in Salt Lake City, Hill's body was brought to Chicago. The funeral fell on Thanksgiving day. Thousands had to be turned away from the West Side Auditorium. The streets were crowded for many blocks by those following the coffin, shocking others by singing Joe Hill's songs. In accordance with his Will, his body was cremated and his ashes distributed the following May 1 by rebels in many lands.

They can tie with mighty chains
Every wheel in the creation
Every mine and every mill
Fleets and armies of the nations
Will at their command stand still

Locked up, Hill was missing acquaintance with the new song hits. Europe was at war, marching to "It's a Long Way to Tipperary", and Sam Murray sent him a copy with a request for something for the unemployed around San Francisco, where many had come hoping to get jobs at the World's Fair. Hill made a song about Bill Brown's job hunt that left him singing:

It's a long way down to the soupline
It's a long way to go
It's a long way down to the soupline
And the soup is weak I know
Goodbye, good old pork chops
Farewell beefsteak rare
It's a long way down to the soupline
But my soup is there.

Meanwhile a worldwide protest grew on his behalf, paralleled only by concern in 1918 for Tom Mooney and in 1927 for Sacco and Vanzetti. From September 22, 1915 on, the Swedish government actively intervened on his behalf and induced President Wilson to do likewise, even though this was a state and not a federal matter and Utah officials and press resented this interference. Hill was to have been shot October 1, but on September 30, after he had written farewell letters beneath the eye of a death-watch, a stay was granted to October 16 when the Pardon Board was to reconvene. The Swedish Prime Minister urged Hill to conciliate the Board of Pardons with an explanation about his wound, but Hill refused and said he wanted a new trial. Since he was charged with the murder of only the elder Morrison, the State could have provided a new trial without conceding an inch on its previous conviction, by deferring execution on that score while he stood trial for the murder of Arling Morrison — but it did not want to give Hill that chance to cross

There is power there is power
In the hands of the working folks
When they stand, hand in hand
That's a power, that's a power
That must rule in every land
One industrial union grand.

When the employment agents found they could not win by drowning out the speakers, they got the city council to pass an ordinance denying the IWW the right to speak. This led to the IWW Free Speech Fight of 1909-1910 and to headlines about the IWW across the nation. Figuring the jail could only hold a limited number, the IWW sent out a call for volunteers to test the constitutionality of the ordinance. These men mounted the box, said a few words and were hauled to jail. On the first day, Nov.2,1909, a hundred and three were arrested. By March, jails and a schoolhouse turned into a jail were filled. Jail conditions and police brutality aroused wide indignation and created pressure in lumber and construction camps to boycott Spokane merchants. A compromise was reached, the IWW resumed publication of its banned *Industrial Worker*, spoke once more on the streets and laid the basis for improved job conditions in the Inland Empire.

Similar free speech fights related to similar issues erupted in Fresno, California in 1910, in San Diego in 1912, and in other towns, with the same basic story. Volunteer speakers were herded to jail, brutalized by police and vigilantes, with the right of free speech eventually asserted.

Did Joe Hill get arrested in these free speech fights? Various histories say he did, but always quote the same source of evidence — an account of a meeting in London England at the time of Hill's execution, reported that various speakers there said he was involved in these fights, and that is not good evidence. A Hill who addressed a San Francisco street meeting protesting San Diego police brutality may have been some other Hill. Those who knew Hill describe him as a quiet man, not a speaker.

Another of Hill's songs, his parody of Casey Jones, got into wide circulation months before it got into the IWW songbook. He wrote it in support of railroad shopworkers who walked out on strike in September 1911 throughout the Harriman system that stretched from Illinois Central

to the Southern Pacific. These shop workers who repaired rail cars and locomotives were divided among 16 different craft unions and wanted to bargain as a federation. Harriman said no. These shop workers struck over 4 years and still did not win, because five other craft unions running the trains still ran them, repaired them and hauled scabs into the shops. It was a situation that painfully illustrated the merits of the IWW argument for industrial unionism, an argument it was almost alone in making in those days.

By 1911 "Casey Jones" had come to mean "locomotive engineer" because of a popular series of ballads memorializing the heroic John Luther Jones of Cayce, Kentucky. Jones had lost his life April 29,1900 while saving the lives of his crew with his full weight on the brakes as his engine plowed into a side-tracked freight projecting into its path. Wallace Saunders, a black worker who took care of Jones' engine, wrote the original version.

It was developed by vaudeville song and dance teams into a powerful rhythmic song, and well before Joe Hill wrote his union parody, others had already added various unprinted verses depicting Casey as the father of numerous children along his line. It was a well known song identified with locomotive engineers, and an appropriate vehicle for ridiculing how separate craft union contracts obligated them to make emergency repairs to keep engines running despite the bungling work of scab shop workers. As the song put it:

The workers on the SP line to strike sent out a call
But Casey Jones was the engineer he wouldn't strike at all
His boiler it was leaking and his drivers on the bum
And his engine and its bearings they were all out of plumb
Casey Jones, kept his junk pile running
Casey Jones was working double time
Casey Jones got a wooden medal
For being good and faithful on the SP line

In Hill's version, Casey met with an accident and "took a trip to heaven" where St. Peter told him "our musicians are on strike, you can get a job a-scabbing any time you like". But the angels got rid of him

Utah precedent that such circumstantial evidence must be like a chain with no defective link; instead the court instructed them to consider the preponderance of the evidence. McDougall got in a closing speech that botched the defense presentation, and Hill was convicted June 27.

On July 8 the judge asked Hill whether he would prefer to be hanged or shot. He answered:

"I'll take shooting. I have been shot a few times and I guess I can stand it again." On September 1, a motion for new trial was denied. In May 1915, Orrin Hilton argued the case before the Utah Supreme Court. In its decision the court dodged defense contentions by saying it could not attempt to do the work of the jury or make up the bad judgement of the jurors, but on those bullet holes it did exert more creative imagination. It argued they could be low in the coat but high in Hill's body if he got shot leaning over the counter with his coat pulled opposite to the direction this would pull it — and that Hill's possession of these bullet holes identified him as clearly as if he has stolen goods form the Morrison Store.

On September 18, 1915, the same imaginative gentlemen met along with the Governor and Attorney General to sit as the Board of Pardons much in the manner of Gilbert and Sullivan's Lord High Executioner. They could not reconsider what they had already passed upon, but did here meet with Hill face to face. Knowing his adamant position about revealing nothing on how he got shot, they urged him to tell them or attorneys privately. Hill said what he wanted was a new trial where witnesses could be properly cross-examined. Any ordinary crook could long before this have arranged with friends to set up some satisfactory explanation about how he got shot — but this was not Hill's way.

During these months in jail Hill wrote more songs. The fracture of the knuckles on his hand impeded writing, but he turned out music to go with the words for "The Rebel Girl" and "Workers of the World Awaken." These two songs are less in the vernacular of the job than most of his songs, but show that in jail he had not lost the perspective of job action:

If the workers take a notion
They can stop all speeding trains
Every ship upon the ocean

Salt Lake pawn shop. He hoped by identifying the gun or its make to establish that it could not have been the gun that killed the Morrisons. When he was arrested the police found in his pants pocket a note from his associate Applequist, reading: "Hilda and Christina were here. We went to the Empress. Tried to find you. Otto."

The Empress was a local theater. There were conflicting accounts of whether Applequist was in the Eselius home when Hill returned wounded, but he was neither seen there nor identified anywhere else thereafter.

These circumstances do make a much better case than the police had against Joe for this chain of events: that Hill went out Saturday evening leaving his gun at the boarding house; that later he returned and picked up the note; that he then went out and somehow got shot and obtained the gun from the person who shot him. For this to be the gun he had bought in the pawn shop, his assailant must have obtained it from the Eselius boarding house, making him most likely Otto Applequist. Whether this is how it happened involves limited conjecture.

Anyway, Hill consistently refused to say how he got wounded. Some urged that he might save his life by telling. He replied that if those who did know did not come forward freely on their own account it would be useless for him to identify them. So he stuck to his position that it was not up to him to prove himself innocent, but up to the police, if he was guilty, to prove that. A good lawyer could have shredded the prosecution's case, and have used physical facts about the wound to show that Hill could not have been wounded in the Morrison store or about 10 o'clock. His trial in June was a farce in which he tried to dismiss Attorney McDougall for not cross-examining witnesses, but he lacked the courtroom skills to bring out the facts himself.

Belatedly a new attorney, Sorn Christensen, was added through the efforts of Virginia Snow Stephen and Orrin Hilton. The court would not let them present any evidence of the fears Morrison had about revenge. They did get a chance to show that the police had tried to get a member of the Eselius household to lie against Hill under threat of jailing her son. The court would not let them ask Dr. Beer whether the holes in Hill's body and jacket could be accounted for except that he was shot with his arms held high. The court would not instruct the jury in accordance with

too. The striking shopworkers welcomed this song of humor and defiance and circulated it across the country. In the spring of 1912 Hill was in British Columbia during a strike on the construction of Canadian Northern. To the tune of "Wearing of the Green", he had the strikers promising to "build no more railroads for overalls and snuff". One grievance was the poorly constructed camps with walls made of potato sacks. To the tune of the "River Shannon" ballad, Hill wrote:

These gunny sack contractors have all been dirty actors
And they're not our benefactors as each fellow worker knows
So we've got to stick together in fine or dirty weather
And we'll show no more white feather where the Fraser River flows.

On this Fraser River strike he wrote other snatches used during the strike but soon forgotten. All used comic jabs to aggravate the bosses and boost the morale of the workers, so they could look down on their bosses for a change. Many of his songs written for specific strike situations paralleled experience elsewhere, and had wide worker appeal.

He chose the popular songs of the day for parody. The 1912 Songbook had one on Irving Berlin's "Turkey Trot", turning "Everybody's Doing It" into an IWW song. The optimism of "Everybody's Joining It" was warranted by the growth of IWW in southern lumber and in eastern textiles. In January workers at American Woolen Company, Lawrence Massachusetts, walked out and asked IWW to handle their strike. John Golden, head of UTW, disgraced himself in the eyes of other union men and women, by offering to supply scabs. Hill sent the strikers a parody on a Sunday School song, "A Little Talk With Golden Makes It Right, All Right". They won their strike.

Hill had 9 new songs in the 1913 Songbook. As if in anticipation of what was brewing in Europe, 2 of the songs were anti-militarist. To the Irish air "Colleen Bawn" he wrote:

We're spending billions every year
For guns and ammunition
Our Army and Our Navy dear

To keep in good condition
Why do they mount their Gatling guns
A thousand miles from oceans
Where hostile fleets could never run
Ain't that a funny notion?

Another, to the rollicking tune of "Sunlight" told the disappointments of a lad who joined the Navy to see the world but found he had to "scrub the deck and polish brass and shine the captain's shoes."

Some of his best-liked songs ridiculed the 1913 forerunners of Archie Bunker, who blamed their troubles on foreigners and blacks. To his Industrial Workers of the World, no worker could be a foreigner. "Steamboat Bill" had a swinging rhythm for one of the dances of 1913, and to it Joe added words about Scissorbill...

He's found in every mining camp in lumber mill
He looks just like a human, he can eat and walk
But you will find he isn't when he starts to talk
He'll say "This is my country" with an honest face
While all the cops they chase him out of every place
Scissorbill says, "This country must be freed
From Negroes, Japs and Dutchmen and the gol-durn Swede..."

A similar worker was "Mr. Block who thinks he may be president some day." The IWW was turning out songbooks in printings of 50,000 at a time, and Mr. Block inspired a cartoon strip about the misfortunes that his lack of class consciousness brought on him.

The gender of the terms in Hill's songs reflects the circumstance that out west the population was predominantly male, and its wage earners almost entirely male. This was balanced somewhat back East by predominantly female textile towns. Children were an important part of the labor force and, except for the textile and garment industries, women's main economic role was to produce children and rear them to working age. Here Hill was no sexist either. He wanted women in his union. To the hit tune "Rainbow", he wrote in early 1913:

We want the tinner and the skinner and the chambermaid

preliminary hearing, I asked him if he did not make that statement but he denied it."

Hill was arraigned on Jan.27, and his preliminary hearing set for the next day. At the hearing he questioned the boy and two other witnesses, for he had no attorney, and presented no defense. Trial was set for June 17. A few days after this January hearing, E.D.McDougall, an attorney, visited Hill and offered his services for free. Hill accepted them, for he had told Ed Rowan, the local IWW secretary who had visited him after the local press published his picture, that this did not involve the IWW and he did not want the union to get him a lawyer. McDougall's poor services at the June trial led some to wonder if the mysterious offer of free help could have been part of the plan to make sure Hill lost.

The sole link to the Morrison murder was Hill's wound. How did he get it? To this day no one knows. A widely held belief ran that he got it out of some romantic affair, but the evidence for this is slim; that a newspaper said that Dr. McHugh told a reporter that was what Hill told him. Hill himself offered no one an explanation. The physical evidence shows that Hill was shot from the front, with his jacket on but no overcoat, so presumably indoors, with his hands raised high as if he had been held up, thus pulling his jacket high, and somewhere about an hour after the Morrison murder, and several miles away from the Morrison store.

He walked to Dr. McHugh's office, which was also the doctor's home about five miles from the Morrison store, about 11:30 Jan.10, rather freshly wounded, his shirt bloodied, his heart grazed, his lung bleeding. There was no bullet hole in his overcoat, though the bullet had gone through his torso, front and back of his jacket and shirts — and had been left wherever he was shot, which could not, then, have been the Morrison store.

Hill insisted that how he got wounded was his own business and that he owed no one any explanation. But some of his statements, combined with other data, do bear on the question. He did have a gun when he entered Dr. McHugh's office. He said he was not armed when he was shot. He threw the gun away on his ride from the doctor's office to his boarding house. Later he went with police unsuccessfully trying to find the gun, and with the police did establish that he had bought a gun in a

may have made them prone to forget the revenge motive and convict Hill: this would end a blood feud that had been going on between Morrison and some gang, a feud that would likely continue against any officers convicting members of that gang.

They now had a chance to end all this while disposing of an "undesirable citizen", a stranger, whose union and whose songs they hated anyway. On Jan.23 through the local press the police informed all, including the gang members, that Joe Hill the IWW songwriter was the man they would try to convict for the Morrison murder.

The unjust convictions that have evoked wide indignation have usually started out, not as a conspiracy by some executive committee of the elite, but as one of the more or less routine injustices that lower authorities perpetrate, confronting those higher up with something congenial to their biases. Their superiors must go along, despite public outcry, or admit the criminal character and class bias of law enforcement.

The only link the police offered to connect Hill with the Morrison murder was the fact that he had a bullet wound for which he offered no explanation, and the Morrison gun may have been fired. The neighbors who saw the 2 masked men flee could give no trustworthy identification, but did try to. Merlin Morrison, the youngest son, 13 at the time and still living in 1979, said when taken to the jail on the 14th to see Hill: "Hillstrom is about the same size and height as one of the men who entered my father's store Saturday night. AS the light was bad, I could not get a lasting impression of the man's features, but Hillstrom appears to be very much the same build as the man who entered the store and whom I saw fire at my father—" or that is how the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the only available record, reported the comments of this 13-year old boy. Again according to the press, for the transcript has been lost, Merlin said much the same at the trial. Hill gave a very different account in September 1915, when in a statement to the Utah Board of Pardons, he recalled Merlin Morrison's visit to the jail thus:

"He was the first one to come up and look at me in the morning after my arrest. Being only a little boy, he spoke his mind right out in my presence, and this is what he said: 'No, that is not the man at all. The ones I saw were shorter and heavier set.' When he testified at the

We want the man that spikes on soles
We want the man that's digging holes
We want the man that's climbing poles
And the trucker and the mucker and the hired man
And all the factory girls and clerks
Yes, we want every one that works...

He wrote his own music for "That's the Rebel Girl, that's the Rebel Girl, to the working class she's a precious pearl," and said he considered that his best song.

In San Pedro, Hill had the use of a piano at Beacon Street Sailors Mission, and many of his songs seem to have been written in San Pedro. He was secretary of the IWW local there and during a short strike of dock workers was picked up by the police. They tried to get passengers on a street car to say he was the man who held them up. None would say so, but they gave Hill 30 days for vagrancy anyway.

Late in 1913 Hill headed for the Salt Lake City area and got a job in the machine shop at the Silver King Mine in Park City, where Otto Applequist, a fellow Swede Joe had known in San Pedro, was foreman. In this area IWW's were not welcome either. Earlier that year the IWW had struck the Utah Construction project at Tucker, and despite attacks by thugs, had won a 25-cent increase and improved conditions. The company retaliated by sending thugs to attack the IWW street meetings in Salt Lake City, where the police arrested the speakers instead of their attackers.

Somewhat before Christmas, Hill and Applequist came to Salt Lake City and visited the sizable Swedish community there, where Hill's musical talents fitted the season's festivities. They stayed at a boarding house run by the Eselius family, some of whom both had known in San Pedro.

It was in a room off the kitchen of this boarding house that Hill was arrested Monday evening, January 13, 1914. He lay in bed, a bullet wound completely through his chest, grazing heart and lungs, and under sedation. As 3 police entered the room, he moved an arm. The chief of police fired at Hill, shattering his knuckles. Later he explained that he thought Hill might be reaching for his gun, though he had none and though

Dr. McHugh, who had informed the police about treating Hill's wound, had told them Hill was under morphine. The chief had come to arrest him on the theory that his wound might tie him to a revenge killing the preceding Saturday night, Jan. 10, in John Morrison's grocery.

John Morrison, a former police officer, had lived in continuous fear of revenge. He had exchanged shots with 3 assailants in his store 7 years earlier, and one of them was killed by police in a chase that followed. Morrison had been attacked again the previous September and had wounded one of his assailants. He spoke of his fear of revenge to several, including his wife, whom he instructed in case of his death to ask police to investigate a certain neighbor. On the afternoon of his death Morrison had told a police associate, Captain John Hemple, that he would gladly give up all he had saved from years of hard work, to be free of his fear of revenge. Hemple told the press, "Morrison was in constant dread of men he had arrested when he was a policeman."

The revenge killing he had feared came as he was closing his store at 10 o'clock Saturday night. One son, Arling, was sweeping; a younger son, Merlin, was near the storeroom at the back. Mr. Morrison was dragging a sack of potatoes across the floor as two masked men, both armed came into the store, hollered "We've got you now!" shot Mr. Morrison as he bent over the sack of potatoes, then shot the boy Arling and left. A revolver on the floor near Arling, belonging to Morrison, probably indicates that Arling was not an intended victim, but was shot as he came out with the store's revolver which was kept in the icebox.

Years later a charge against Joe Hill, more serious to students of labor history than any police contention, was made by historian Vernon Jensen in the *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* April 1951. There, Jensen wrote that Dr. McHugh, who had treated Hill's chest wound, had told him in the late forties that Hill had confessed the Morrison murder to him. According to his account, McHugh had asked Hill on Monday evening whether he had shot Morrison, and Hill had answered, "I shot him in self defense. The older man reached for the gun and I shot him and the younger boy grabbed the gun and shot me and I shot him to save my life. I wanted some money to get out of town." Dr. McHugh had given no such story to the police nor in the trial. The alleged confession

does not fit the known facts, for Mr. Morrison was shot while dragging a sack of potatoes across the center aisle where he had no access to the gun that was in the icebox. It was plainly a revenge killing, with no hindrance to robbery, but no robbery attempted.

But back to 1914. Until Dr. McHugh, who had met Hill at social events and knew him as the author of IWW parodies, notified the police about Hill's wound and arranged to sedate him, the police had followed the obvious revenge clues but without success.

The Morrison gun had one spent cartridge. It was the practice of Salt Lake City police to let the hammer rest on an empty chamber or discharged cartridge as an extra safety precaution. No bullet from the Morrison gun was found in the store, and probably it was not fired; yet it could have been, if the bullet remained in the body of the man it hit. Neighbors who rushed to the store on hearing the shots, said that one of two masked men held his hands to his chest as though wounded; one neighbor reported the only words spoken by the pair as "I'm shot," while another heard this as "Oh Bob." There were blood stains on the ground. So police considered that one of the two men may have been wounded by the Morrison gun. Hill's wound, however, went completely through his chest.

Blood stains on the ground led in diverse directions. Some went down alleys, some to warehouses, some to railroad tracks. They could not have all been made by one man, and all they led to was a dog with a bleeding paw. Two men were apprehended in the alley as they grabbed a freight leaving town; they were wanted in Arizona for a $300 robbery, and were ruled out as suspects somehow. Other suspects were taken in and released. A man had been seen lying in a ditch at 11:30 Saturday night, and got up and ran away when a passerby asked him if he needed help. Later a streetcar conductor reported the man had taken the streetcar downtown and identified him as Frank Z. Wilson, an ex-convict Morrison had helped send to prison.

The revenge theory and all other trails were dropped by police once they arrested Hill. The doctor who had told them about Hill knew him as the man who wrote those IWW songs, and like the Chief of Police in San Pedro, they were satisfied they had "the right man". One circumstance